The Shiites

And *Al-Aqsa* Mosque

By:

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Committee for the Defence of the Belief of Ahlus-Sunnah - Palestine

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Introduction

All praise is due to Allah, Lord of all the worlds. Peace and blessings of Allah be upon the Messenger, his household and companions.

Perhaps some people will disapprove that we write about the position that Aqsa Mosque occupies in the hearts of the Muslims and in the Sharee'ah of Islam. For, the sanctity of *Al-Aqsa* mosque is an incontestable fact among the Muslims and the position it occupies does not need any further explanation. The merits of this mosque are established by explicit texts from the Qur'an and the Sunnah and the consensus of the Muslims.

However, we are sure that the reader of this book will excuse us for the facts we are going to reveal, and realize how much we have been deceived by some people who claim to support *Al-Aqsa* Mosque and the Land of Israa and to defend the oppressed Palestinian people and their sacred sites.

Therefore, it is very pertinent to rise up in defence of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque and to call attention to the fact that the Shiite books and their authorized sources, which they wrote with their own hands, indicate that they have no regard or recognition for *Al-Aqsa* Mosque in its present location and that, according to them. They also hold that 'real *Al-Aqsa* mosque' is in the Heaven and that majority of people mistakenly believe that it is the mosque that is in Palestine!!

We have tried to not leave out those claims without refutations that show their falsity. This is a contribution we can make to reveal the truth so that all the Muslims will be aware of the enormity of the deception and fraud of those folks.

Through research and exhaustive study, we have affirmed that all those Jews and orientalists who have attempted to cast doubt on the position of the blessed *Al-Aqsa* Mosque relied heavily, in support their vicious claims, on Shiite sources. They thereby used these sources as a weapon against foundations of our Ummah with an aim to shaken the position of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque in our hearts.

We deem it suitable to point it out here that our goal is to unite the ranks of this Ummah to support our sacred sites and to love those individuals whom Allah used to win these places for Islam. We also intend to block the way in the face of these Jewish 'professors' and orientalists who find in the Shiite books, a ready tool for weakening the position that *Al-Aqsa* Mosque occupies in the hearts of the Muslims. As such, those dubious narrations whose goal is to cast doubt on the sanctity of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque must be meticulously scrutinized and the sanctity of that mosque must be proved through argument and authentic evidences.

All praise is due to Allah, Lord of all the worlds.

Tariq Ahmad Hijazi

Falsehood in a Book!!

"Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa, Ilaa Ayna" is the title of a book written by the Shiite scholar, Jaafar Murtadha Al-'Amili. He wrote: "A number of facts have been clear to us concerning that *Al-Aqsa* Mosque. It is now definitely known that it is not the mosque that is in Palestine."!! He then mentioned many statements and narrations that support his interpretation of the incidence of Israa and that explicitly mentioned that *Al-Aqsa* Mosque is a mosque in the heaven!! These statements are narrations are quoted from authorized Shiite sources and their books of Tafseer.

He concluded that *Al-Aqsa* is a mosque in the heaven and not what the generality of Muslims believe to be *Al-Aqsa* Mosque.

In his book, '*As-Saheeh fee Seerah An-Nabiyy Al-A'zam'*, Al-'Aamili claimed that when 'Umar – may Allah be pleased with him – entered Jerusalem, there was no mosque there, let alone Al-Aqsa' and that *Al-Aqsa* Mosque unto which the Prophet, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him took a night journey and the surroundings of which Allah blessed was in the heaven.

While mentioning the opinions concerning the Jewish's mischief-making in Jerusalem twice as mentioned in Surah Al-Israaa, he describes the opinion that the mosque referred to in the Surah is *Al-Aqsa* Mosque as mere claims.

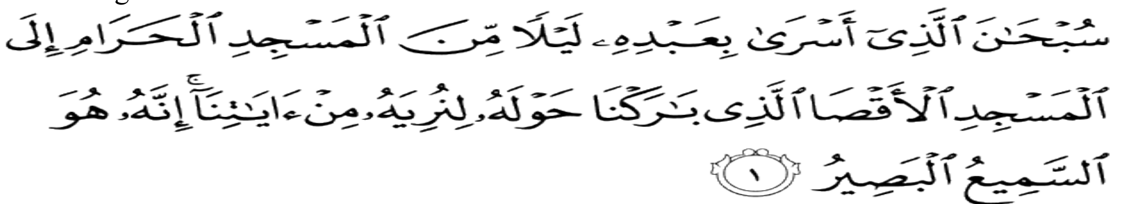
One of the proofs he quoted in support of the view that *Al-Aqsa* Mosque is a mosque in the heaven is a report recorded in a book, *'Bihaar Al-Anwaar'* by Al-Majlisi. The report goes thus: "I asked Abu Abdullah about the meritorious mosques and he said: 'The Sacred Mosque (in Makkah) and the Prophet's Mosque in Al-Madeenah.' I asked him: 'What about *Al-Aqsa* Mosque, may I be your ransom?' He answered: 'That one is in the heaven. It was unto there that the Messenger of Allah, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him took a night journey.' I then said: 'But the people say it is the one that is in Jerusalem?' He said: 'The mosque that is in Kufah (in Iraq) is more meritorious than it.'"

Now, the question is: Can the claim made by Al-'Amili be regarded as heresy in the estimation of the Shiites? Or it is a firm-rooted doctrine of theirs? Let us go to their books of Tafseer and see the position of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque in them.

The Position of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque in Shiite Tafseer Books

One: *Tasfeer As-Saafi*.

Concerning Allah's statement:



"Glorified (and Exalted) is He (Allâh) (above all that (evil) they associate with Him) Who took His slave (Muhammad, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) for a journey by night from Al-Masjid-al-Harâm (at Makkah) to the farthest mosque (in Jerusalem), the neighbourhood whereof We have blessed, in order that We might show him (Muhammad, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) of Our Ayât (proofs, evidences, lessons, signs, etc.). Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer." (Al-Israaa 17:1)

In his commentary on the above verse, Al-Kaashaani, in his '*Tafseer As-Saafi*' said: "The journey was to the kingdoms of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque which is in the heaven, as shown by the reports."

He follows up this statement with this narration: Alqummi narrated from Al-Baqir that he was sitting in the Sacred Mosque in Makkah, when He then took a glance at the heaven and another glance at the Ka'bah and then recited the verse, *'"Glorified (and Exalted) is He (Allâh) (above all that (evil) they associate with Him) Who took His slave (Muhammad, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) for a journey by night from Al-Masjid-al-Harâm (at Makkah) to the farthest mosque (in Jerusalem)'*. He repeated this three times and then turned towards Isma'il Al-Ju'fi and said, 'What do the people of Iraq say about this verse, O Iraqi?' Isma'il answered, 'They say that the Prophet, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him was taken for a night journey from the Sacred Mosque to Jerusalem.' Al-Baaqir then said, 'It is not as they say. But he was taken for a night journey from here to here', pointing to the heaven. And he added, 'What is in between them is sacred.'"

Two: *Tafseer Nuruth-Thaqalain*:

In *Tafseer Nuruth-Thaqalain*, the author, Al-Huwaizi started his commentary on Surah Al-Israa by mentioning the above narrations to demonstrate his belief in them. He recorded on the authority of Saalim Al-Hannat that a man asked Abu Abdullah about the meritorious mosques and he said: 'The Sacred Mosque (in Makkah) and the Prophet's Mosque in Al-Madeenah.' The questioner asked him: 'What about *Al-Aqsa* Mosque, may I be your ransom?' He answered: 'That one is in the heaven. It was unto there that the Messenger of Allah, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him took a night journey.' The questioner then said: 'But the people say it is the one that is in Jerusalem?' He said: 'The mosque that is in Kufah (in Iraq) is more meritorious than it.'"

Al-Huwaisi added: "'Ali ibn Ibrahim recorded in his Tafseer on the authority of Isma'il Al-Ju'fi who narrated: I was sitting in the mosque while Abu Ja'far was in a corner of that mosque. He took a glance at the heaven and another glance at the Ka'bah and then said: *'Glorified (and Exalted) is He (Allâh) (above all that (evil) they associate with Him) Who took His slave (Muhammad, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) for a journey by night from Al-Masjid-al-Harâm (at Makkah) to the farthest mosque (in Jerusalem)'*. He repeated this three times and then turned towards me (Isma'il Al-Ju'fi) and said, 'What do the people of Iraq say about this verse, O Iraqi?' I answered, 'They say that the Prophet, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him was taken for a night journey from the Sacred Mosque to Jerusalem.' Abu Ja'far then said, 'It is not as they say. But he was taken for a night journey from here to here', pointing to the heaven. And he added,

‘What is in between them is sacred.’”

Three: *Tafseer Al-‘Ayyashi:*

Al-‘Ayashi, in his Tafseer, at beginning of his commentary on Surah Al-Israaa, mentioned the narration that affirms that *Al-Aqsa* Mosque is in the heaven. He recorded on the authority of Saalim Al-Hannat that a man asked Abu Abdullah about the meritorious mosques and he said: ‘The Sacred Mosque (in Makkah) and the Prophet’s Mosque in Al-Madeenah.’ The questioner asked him: ‘What about *Al-Aqsa* Mosque, may I be your ransom?’ He answered: ‘That one is in the heaven. It was unto it that the Messenger of Allah, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him took a night journey.’ The questioner then said: ‘But the people say it is the one that is in Jerusalem?’ He said: ‘The mosque that is in Kufah (in Iraq) is more meritorious than it.’”

Four: *Al-Burhaan fee Tafseer Al-Qur’aan*:

Al-Bahraani mentioned in his Tafseer, the narration that is often quoted in most Shiite books of Tafseer. So did At-Tabtabaai in his Tafseer Al-Meezaan where it is explicitly mentioned that Al-Masjid *Al-Aqsa* is in the heaven and not the one that is in Jerusalem. Al-Bahraani mentioned the above-quoted narration from Saalim Al-Hannat.

Five: *Bayaan As-Sa‘aadah*:

In his work, *Bayaan As-Sa‘aadah fee Maqaamaat Al-‘Ibaadah’*, Sultaan Aj-Janaabidhi mentioned the following opinions concerning the interpretation of Allah’s statement, *‘Glorified (and Exalted) is He (Allâh) (above all that (evil) they associate with Him) Who took His slave (Muhammad, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) for a journey by night from Al-Masjid-al-Harâm (at Makkah) to the farthest mosque’*. He said: *Al-Aqsa* Mosque that is in the fourth heaven which is known as *Al-Bayt Al-Ma’moor*.”

He interpreted Allah’s statement, *‘the neighbourhood whereof We have blessed’* saying: “The neighbourhood of Jerusalem comprises of Syria and Egypt and both of them excelled other countries with lots of animals of every specie. And *Al-Bayt Al-Ma’moor* in the fourth heaven is known for the great blessedness of its surroundings.”

In the light of the above, it is clear that the discussion in Shiite Tafseer book concerning the mosque to which the Prophet, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him was taken for a night journey revolves around the claim that it is a mosque in the heaven in *Al-Bayt Al-Ma’moor* and that the mosque’s name is *Al-Aqsa* and that it only shares the same name with the mosque that is Jerusalem.

Now let us move to another section of the Shiite authorised books to know the reality of the position of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque in their beliefs.

Position of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque in Shiite Sources

The other Shiite authorised books follow the same opinion expressed by their Tafseer books, concerning the location of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque.

Some of their most prominent books that expressed the same opinion are:

One: *Bihaar Al-Anwaar*:

Al-Majlisi mentioned the following narration in his book, '*Bihaar Al-Anwaar*': "I asked Abu Abdullah about the meritorious mosques and he said: 'The Sacred Mosque (in Makkah) and the Prophet's Mosque in Al-Madeenah.' I asked him: 'What about *Al-Aqsa* Mosque, may I be your ransom?' He answered: 'That one is in the heaven. It was unto it that the Messenger of Allah, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him took a night journey.' I then said: 'But the people say, it is the one that is in Jerusalem?' He said: 'The mosque that is in Kufah (in Iraq) is more meritorious than it.'"

Two: *Muntahal-Aamaal*:

Muntahal-Aamaal by 'Abbas Al-Qummi has the following to say: "Though it is popularly held that *Al-Aqsa* Mosque is the one that is in Jerusalem, what is preponderant in the light of the many Hadiths is that *Al-Aqsa* Mosque is *Al-Bayt Al-Ma'moor* that is in the fourth heaven, and it is the farthest mosque."

Three: *Kaamil Az-Ziyaaraat*:

Ibn Qulubah mentioned in his book, *Kaamil Az-Ziyaaraat* on the authority of Abu Abdullah As-Sadiq who said: "A man came to the commander of the believers while he was in Kufah mosque and said, 'Peace and mercy of Allah be upon you, commander of the faithful!' He returned the greeting. The man then said, 'May I be your ransom, I want to go to *Al-Aqsa* Mosque and I am here to salute and bid you farewell.' Abu Abdullah said, 'What do you want to attain by that journey.' The man answered, 'Reward.' He then told him, 'Go and sell your camel, eat your provision and pray in this mosque. For, an obligatory prayer performed here has the reward of a perfectly performed Hajj, and a voluntary prayer performed here has the reward of an accepted 'Umrah. The blessing from this mosque extends to a distance of twelve miles. The right side of this mosque is blessing and its left side is strategy. There are in its center a spring of oil, a spring of milk and a spring of water that is a drinking for the believers. There is also another spring of water that is purification for the believers. It is from this mosque that the Noah's Ark took off. Here were Nasr, Yaghut and Ya'uq. Seventy prophets and seventy regents of whom I am one prayed in this mosque. If a calamity-afflicted person supplicates for anything he wants in this mosque, Allah will grant his request and remove his calamity."

Four: *As-Saheeh fee Seerah An-Nabiyy Al-A'zam'*:

In his book, *'As-Saheeh fee Seerah An-Nabiyy Al-A'zam'*, Ja'far Al-'Aamili wrote: "*Al-Aqsa* is a mosque in the heaven." He then cited a Hadith that is not authentic, either in its chain of transmission or in its text, and attributed the same to the Messenger of Allah, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him. Here is the Hadith: "When I was taken for a night journey to the heaven, I found this written on the Throne: There is no deity worthy of being worshipped except Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah and I support him with 'Ali – peace be upon him."

In his book, *'Al-Aqsa Mosque: To Where?',* Al-'Aamili supports his interpretation with the following statement: "The word '*Aqsa'* linguistically simply means 'far' and the Qur'anic rhetoric is the greatest testimony for this. For, Allah says:



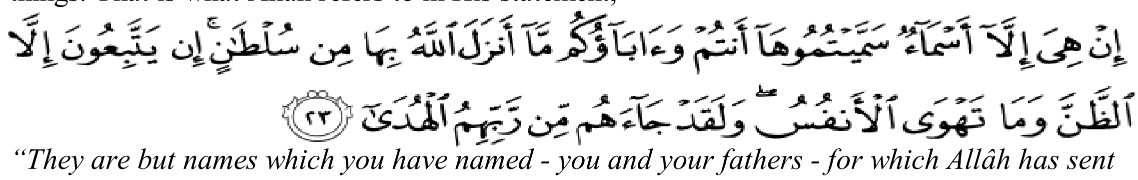
ٱلْمَسْجِدِ ٱلْأَقْصَا ٱلَّذِى بَٰرَكْنَا حَوْلَهُۥ لِنُرِيَهُۥ مِنْ ءَايَٰتِنَآ ۚ إِنَّهُۥ هُوَ
ٱلسَّمِيعُ ٱلْبَصِيرُ ﴿١﴾

"Glorified (and Exalted) is He (Allâh) (above all that (evil) they associate with Him) Who took His slave (Muhammad, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) for a journey by night from Al-Masjid-al-Harâm (at Makkah) to the farthest mosque (in Jerusalem), the neighbourhood whereof We have blessed, in order that We might show him (Muhammad, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) of Our Ayât (proofs, evidences, lessons, signs, etc.). Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer." (Al-Israaa 17:1)

He wrote further: "Israaa means night journey, whether horizontally or vertically. And the word 'Al-Aqsa' means 'far'. If it is hypothetically agreed that the *Al-Aqsa* Mosque is the one that is in Jerusalem, though it may be far from the people of Hijaz, yet it is near to the people of Shaam. It follows then that '*Al-Aqsa'* should be equally far from all people. We have affirmed in the light of the Hadiths that we have mentioned earlier that *Al-Aqsa* Mosque is in the fourth heaven in *Al-Bayt Al-Ma'moor.*"

Five: *Al-Kaafi*

According to the narration of *Al-Kaafi*, someone told Abu Abdullaah: "I was told that you have one of Allah's Names by which you travel to the *Bayt Al-Muqaddas* and return to your house every night." He said: "Do you know *Bayt Al-Muqaddas*?" I said: "The only *Bayt Al-Muqaddas* that I know is the one that is Shaam." He said: "That is not *Bayt Al-Muqaddas*. *Bayt Al-Muqaddas* is the house of the family of Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family)." I said: "Until now, I used to believe that *Bayt Al-Muqaddas* is that one that is Jerusalem." He said: "Those are the niches of the prophets. They are used to be called, enclosures of the niches until the period between Jesus and Muhammad – peace be upon them – and there was an affliction of the polytheists and there were calamities in the houses of devils. It was then that people changed and altered names of things. That is what Allah refers to in His statement,



"They are but names which you have named - you and your fathers - for which Allâh has sent down no authority." (An-Najm 53:23)"

Six: 'Ilal Ash-Shara'ia:

In this book, its author, Muhammad Babawayh Al-Qummi recorded that Thabit ibn Dinar said: "I asked Zainul-'Aabideen Ali ibn Husain ibn 'Ali ibn Abi Talib about Allah, High and Exalted, as to whether He could be described to be in a particular place." Zainul-'Abideen responded: "Far is He above all that." I said: "Why then did He take His Prophet on a night journey to the heaven?" He said: "In order to show him the kingdoms of the heavens and His wonderful creation."

Seven*: Al-Misbaah fil-Ad'iyah was-Salawaat waz-Ziyaaraat:*

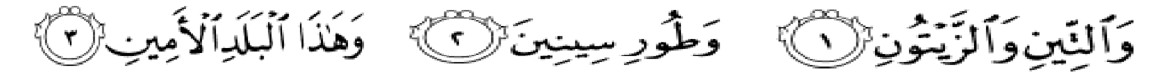
In the commentary on *Mi'raaj* invocation mentioned in the book, *'Al-Misbaah fil-Ad'iyah was-Salawaat waz-Ziyaaraat'*, by Taqiyyyuddeen Al-Kaf'ami, the author wrote: "This invocation is of high importance. It is narrated by the commander of the faithful 'Ali ibn Abi Taalib from the Prophet, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him. The summary of the narration is as follows, 'When I was taken for a night journey to the heaven, I kept braking one screen after another until I broke seventy thousand screens. And between every two screens is a distance of what is between the east and the west seventy thousand times."

Eight: ***Tafseel Wasaa'il ash-Shee'ah***:

Muhammad ibn Al-Hasan Al-'Aamili (d.1104) mentioned in his Book, *'Tafseel Wasaa'il ash-Shee'ah ilaa Tahseel Masaa'il ash-Sharee'ah'* a chapter he named: "Importance of respecting Makkah, Al-Madeenah and Kufah and desirability of living there, giving alms there, performing much prayer there and traveling there."

Under this title, he mentioned narrations that claim that, "as Makkah is a city sanctified by Allah and Al-Madeenah is a city sanctified by the Prophet, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him; Kufah is also a city sanctified by the commander of the faithful, 'Ali ibn Abi Taalib – may Allah be pleased with him. No tyrant will intend to do harm to that city except that Allah destroys him!"

He also mentioned the following narrations: Abul-Hasan Musa ibn Ja'far narrated on the authority of his fathers that the Messenger of Allah, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him said: "Indeed, Allah selected four cities. He, High and Exalted says:



"By the fig, and the olive. By Mount Sinai. By this city of security (Makkah)." (At-Teen 95:1-3)

The fig is Al-Madeenah, the olive is Jerusalem, Mount Sinai is Kufah and the city of security is Makkah."

In his commentary on the following verse:



"And We made the son of Maryam (Mary) and his mother as a sign, And We gave them refuge on high ground, a place of rest, security and flowing streams." (Al-Mu'minoon 23:50)

Muhammad ibn Al-Hasan Al-'Aamili claimed that the 'high ground', is Kufah; that the 'place of rest', is the Kufah mosque and that the 'flowing stream', is the Euphrates.

Superiority of the Kufah Mosque over the Three Mosques in the Estimation of the Shiites

In addition to Kufah mosque being superior to *Al-Aqsa* Mosque in the estimation of the Shiites, they also have narrations, indicating that the Kufah mosque is superior to all other mosques with the only exception of the Sacred Mosque in Makkah; and that Kufah is the hallowed place blessed by Allah, the place of worship of the angels before Adam was created and the place of worship for Adam and the messengers and prophets, as well as the saints and righteous men who came after him! They also have reports indicating that there is a garden of Paradise in the middle of the Kufah and that the city will be the first point of resurrection of the creation on the Day of Judgment! However, the strangest thing is that it is regarded as one of the mosques to which a journey is taken (for the purpose of worship)!!

This is supported by the following narrations from their books:

Sheikh Sadduq recorded in '*Al-Khisaal'*: "No journey should be undertaken (for the purpose of worship) but to one of the three mosques: The Sacred Mosque, the Prophet's Mosque and the Kufah mosque."

He also recorded in his work, '*Maa laa Yahdhuruhul-Faqeeh'*, on the authority of the commander of the faithful 'Ali – may Allah be pleased with him – that he said: "No journey should be undertaken (for the purpose of worship) but to one of the three mosques: The Sacred Mosque, the Prophet's Mosque and the Kufah mosque."

The Kufah occupies, in the estimation of the Shiites, a position that is higher than that of Al-Aqsa. This is explicitly mentioned in their narrations which they wrote in their authorized books. Some of these false narrations are as follows:

Al-Kulaini recorded in his book, 'Al-Kaafi' on the authority of Khalid Al-Qalaanasi who said he heard Abu Abullaah As-Saadiq saying: "A prayer performed in Kufah mosque equals a thousand prayers performed elsewhere."

Hassaan ibn Mihraan reported on the authority of Abu Abdullaah who narrated that he heard the commander of the faithful 'Ali ibn Abi Taalib – may Allah be pleased with him – saying: "Makkah is Allah's sanctified city, Al-Madeenah is the sanctified city of the Messenger of Allah, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him and Kufah is my sanctified city. If any tyrant intends to harm it, Allah will destroy him."

Another version reads: "Kufah is a sanctified city of Allah, His Messenger and the commander of the faithful. A prayer in it equals a thousand prayer performed elsewhere and a dirham spent in it equals a thousand dirhams spent elsewhere."

Another narration says: "Indeed, Allah has a sacred city which is Makkah, and His Messenger has a sacred city which is Al-Madeenah, the commander of the faithful has a sacred city which is Kufah and we have a sacred city which is Qom. A woman from among my offspring whose name is Faatimah will be buried there. Whoever visits her will certainly be admitted to Paradise."

Karbala is Superior to the Ka'bah and *Al-Aqsa* Mosque!!

It is in the habit of the Shiites to regard as sacred, places that are not designated so in the Book of Allah or in the Sunnah of His Messenger, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him. One of these places they regard as holy is Karbala, especially, the grave of Husayn ibn 'Ali – may Allah be pleased with him and his father.

It is reported from Abu Abdullaah that he said: "If you want to perform Hajj and you are not able to do so; then go to the grave of Husayn. For, a reward of Hajj will be recorded for you. If you want to perform 'Umrah and you are unable to do so; then go to the grave of Husayn. For, a reward of 'Umrah will be recorded for you."

A report in '*Bihaar al-Anwaar'* goes thus: "Allah selected the land of Karbala as a safe and blessed sanctuary twenty four thousand years before He created the land of the Ka'bah and selected it as a sanctuary. He sanctified and blessed it; and it remained blessed and sanctified before Allah created the creation. It will continue to be blessed and sanctified until Allah will make it the most superior spot in Paradise and the best abode where the saints will abide in Paradise."

Their belief in the superiority of visiting the grave of Husayn is so extreme that, in their estimation, visiting Husayn's grave in Karbala is more meritorious than performing Hajj. It is reported that Abu Abdullaah said: "Whoever visits Husayn's grave on the day of 'Arafah, Allah will record for him the reward of a million Hajj with Al-Qaim, reward of a million 'Umrah with Allah's Messenger, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him, reward of manumission of a thousand bondsmen and reward of provision of a thousand horses in the way of Allah. Allah, High and Exalted will say, 'My truthful slave believes in My promise!' And the angels will say, 'Such and such is a truthful servant, Allah commends him from over His Throne; and in the earth, he is called Karubiy."

It is not only that visiting Husayn's grave is more meritorious than Hajj in the estimation of these people. They also believe that it is the best act of worship, according to their narrations. One of these narrations goes thus: "Among the best acts of worship is to visit Husayn's grave."

Al-Majlisi titled a chapter, 'Visiting Husayn's grave is the best of all deeds'. In this chapter, he mentioned narrations that are similar to the above in meaning.

Their sheikh, Al-Faidh Al-Kaashaani, in his commentary on the narrations indicating the superiority of visiting Husayn's grave, said: "This is not much for someone whom Allah has made the leader of the believers, for whom He created the heavens and the earth; and whom He made His path, the guide unto Him and His door through whom He is reached and His cord that links Him with His servants from among His messengers and prophets. This is in spite of the fact that visiting this grave involves financial obligations, physical stress, travelling out of one's hometown and bearing of hardships."

This is just a few of the merits that the Shiites believe that Kufah mosque and the land of Karbala have. The reader can refer to Imamite books of Fiqh and Mazaaraat and other Shiite narration books for more of this.

There is no doubt that the Shiite animosity towards the Umayyad and their excessive hatred for them led to their condemnation of the former for their reconstruction of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque and the city of Jerusalem. This is one of the reasons for the Shiites' disparaging of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque and giving other places a position and merit higher than that of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque in their belief. This extremism led them into giving their own so-called holy places a position higher than that of the three Mosques to which Muslims are allowed to undertake a journey for the purpose of worship.

The Shiites also perfected the act of spreading venoms in order to weaken the established beliefs of

Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah by insisting on casting doubt on all that is recorded concerning the virtue of the blessed *Al-Aqsa* Mosque in the Qur'aan and the Sunnah.

How could Jerusalem has a place in their hearts since it was 'Umar – may Allah be pleased with him – who won it for Islam, and it was Salahuddeen Al-Ayyubi – may Allah have mercy upon him – who liberated it and it became the lighthouse of knowledge and the base of the scholars for ages?!!

In spite of all this, the Shiite belief concerning the position of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque and its very location in the earth or in the heaven can still be regarded as confused due to the confusion in their narrations. Some of them say that *Al-Aqsa* Mosque is the one in Palestine and enumerated its virtues. At-Toosi mentioned this in his work, '*Al-Khilaaf'*, and Al-Haliy in his work, '*Tahreer al-Ahkaam'* and *'Tadhkirah al-Huffaz'*. However, the majority of the Shiites believe that Kufah mosque is better than *Al-Aqsa* Mosque.

Statements of the Contemporary Shiites Concerning the Position of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque

There are many statements accredited to the Shiites that disparage *Al-Aqsa* Mosque in order to give their so-called holy places a position far higher than that of the three Mosques unto which Muslims are allowed to undertake a journey for the purpose of worship. The following are some of these statements:

Liberate Karbala before Quds!!

In the editorial of one of the editions of the Shiite *Al-Menbar* magazine, titled, **"Before Jerusalem, Liberate Karbala first!"** the author wrote: "Indeed, Karbala is the holiest and the nobles place on the surface of the earth – including Makkah and Al-Madeenah – according to the clear statements of the holy imams. This is because Karbala attained its holiness through its embrace of the body of Allah's revenge and a part of His Messenger, imam Abu 'Abdullah Husayn whose pure blood has mixed with the dust of that land thereby attaining the highest nobility that a land could ever have. For, it became through this, a direction of the free people, a place of refuge for the hearts, a place frequented by the friends and a point of visit for the poor and the needy."

The writer added: "Whatever holiness and nobleness that Al-Quds could have, it will remain behind Karbala. The Quds could not be compared to Karbala nor can the Dome of the Rock be compared to Husayn… Al-Quds in not our primary issue! The fundamental issue is Karbala! Before we liberate Al-Quds, we have to liberate Karbala first. It is from there that we can move to Palestine and from there to all other countries with the torches of light and guidance. We have earlier explained that it is impossible for this Ummah to take back Al-Quds as long as the Ummah has not yet returned to Muhammad and 'Ali – peace be upon them."!!

He further wrote: "Return to Muhammad and 'Ali and Al-Quds will be returned to you through the Mahdi (the expected messiah)! Liberate Karbala first and before any other thing; then think of Al-Quds and other matters…"!!

Superiority of Najaf over Al-Quds in the poems of Ibn Ma'soom:

Ibn Ma'soom is a poet, who employed his poetry in the service of his creed. This reflects clearly in his work, *'Salaafah al-'Asr'*. When he made pilgrimage to Najaf, he composed a poetry passage in which he expressed his belief in the superiority of Najaf over *Al-Aqsa* Mosque.

The Dome of Samarra is More Important than Liberation of Al-Quds!!

In a lecture delivered by the Kuwaiti Shiite, Yaasir Al-Habeeb, at London after the bombing of the Samarra dome in Iraq, he commented on the event saying: "The usurped noble military sanctity still remains demolished with its rubbles on the bodies of the two infallible imams – peace be upon them and there is no one to remove these debris. Also, this sanctuary that is still in the hands of the Nawaasib - the Ahlus-Sunnah – must be taken back. The importance of reclaiming this sanctuary is greater than the importance of reclaiming Al-Quds, for reclaiming this sanctuary is greater in Allah's estimation!! The body of the infallible imam is greater than the Dome of the Rock even with Allah's Messenger's ascension to the heaven from there."

Samarra and Baqee'a Al-*Gharqad* are Greater in Position than Al-Quds in Shiites' Estimation!!

Some Shiite proselytizers condemn the concern some of their political leaders show for the issue of Al-Quds and regard that as political goals. This is due to the great difference among their scholar regarding the position of Al-Quds in the light of their clear texts and their commentaries. Therefore, they regard such concern as politically motivated and not religious!!

Yaasir Al-Habeeb wrote: "The believers should pay greater attention to the issue of the holiest

place. This place supersedes Jerusalem in its nobleness and holiness. In fact, there should not be any comparison between both. Then on which legal basis is this popular Shiite activity on the issue of Jerusalem as if it is our priority?!! No! Though we are not unconcerned with the issue of Jerusalem, we are legally obliged to make the issue of holy Samarra and Baqee'a al-Gharqad our priority. After that, we can move to the issue of Jerusalem and other issues. We must, first of all, liberate Samarra and *Baqee'a* from the grips of the *Nawaasib*. Liberation of Jerusalem from the hands of the Jews can come after that. However, it is surprising how the Shiites could be oblivious of this fact!!"

Attempts at Casting Doubt on the Position of *Al-Aqsa* in *'Ya Hosein'* Forums

A question about the position of *Al-Aqsa* came up at *'Ya Hosein'* forum, which is one of the Shiites forums on the internet. The question came up as a debate topic under the title: **"Is the mosque in Palestine *Al-Aqsa* Mosque that Allah speaks about in the Qur'aan?"**

The responses, comments and contributions are as follows:

One of them wrote: "It is noted that *Al-Aqsa* Mosque that is Palestine now has no basis in the reports of *Ahlul-Bayt*. Rather, *Al-Aqsa* Mosque is the one that is in the heaven. A keen observe will realize that this Rock is holy in the estimation of the Jews. Many of the merits that are originally for the mosque of the commander of the faithful – the Kufah mosque – have been altered and given to their so-called *Al-Aqsa* which is the direction of their Jewish forefathers."

Another wrote: "The position of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque is one of the Jewish heresies that Ahlus-Sunnah have preserved and acted upon."

Another contributor wrote: "The concern for *Al-Aqsa* Mosque and for the Sharee'ah rule in Palestine did not emanate out of the belief that the mosque is sacred. It is only as a result of the fatwa made by the authorities that we must follow. If our authorities make it obligatory upon us to support the Palestinian issue and support its people and defend them with available and possible means, then we must do that, even if *Al-Aqsa* Mosque is not the one that is in Jerusalem and even if there are no holy Islamic landmarks in Palestine."

Another commentator wrote: "If Jerusalem that is Palestine has this importance, why didn't we find any of the *Ahlul-Bayt* praising it?! What we find, on the contrary, is their statements that the Kufah mosque is much more important than it."

Another one wrote: "Both the Shiites and the deviant groups testify that the one who built the mosque that is in Palestine is the second usurper. There are platforms there on which Kharrabuddeen Al-Ayyubi made his speeches. Unfortunately, there are some Shiites who are saddened by the present condition of Jerusalem and were shedding tears when the Jews were making excavations near *Al-Aqsa* Mosque!"

Another contributor wrote: "The preponderant view – and Allah knows best – is that *Al-Aqsa* Mosque is not the one that is in Palestine. Had it deserved such an importance, the Ahlul-Bayt would have certainly informed us about that and commanded us to visit it as they had done concerning other holy places. Therefore, it is necessary for a wise person to carefully study these issues to avoid falling into ambiguities."

These are just examples of the stand these people take concerning *Al-Aqsa* Mosque in their free writings and in their discussions and forums.

Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jewish Writings

The Jewish have different ways of disparaging *Al-Aqsa* Mosque and casting doubts on its sacredness in order to influence the Muslims. You can hardly find a book or research work done by the malicious Jews that did not claim that the sacredness of Jerusalem was coloured with many uncertainties. These writers used twisted methodologies and quoted texts that do not support their claim in the least. But their goal is to disparage the realities of Islam and weaken the position that its holy places occupy in the hearts of the Muslims.

Prominent among these efforts are their attempts at misinterpreting the Qur'anic verses that explicitly mention the virtue of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque and casting doubts on Prophet's Hadiths that entire Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah agreed on their authenticity. They claim that *Al-Aqsa* Mosque is a mosque in the heaven and not the one known to the Muslims! They claim that the word, '*Aqsa'*, indicates that it is a prayer place in the heaven. These malevolent Jews find the Shiite narrations that aver that *Al-Aqsa* is a mosque in the heaven as ready tools to promote their vicious theory! Here are some of their writings that claim that *Al-Aqsa* is a mosque in the heaven:

Buhl and Al-Quds:

In Encyclopedia of Islam under the word 'Al-Kuds', a Jewish writer, Buhl F. writes: "The Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) probably believed that *Al-Aqsa* Mosque is in heaven."

He wrote further: "The Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) might have understood from the beginning that the mosque mentioned in the noble verse has its location in the heaven and not the one that was later built in Jerusalem city."

Isaac Hasson:

Isaac Hasson, another Jewish researcher and a member of the Institute of Asian and African Studies at Hebrew University wrote in the introduction to his editing of the book, *'Fadaail al-Baytul-Maqdis'* by Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Ahmad Al-Waasiti: "It is known that a group of Shiites do not believe that the mosque that is in Jerusalem has no superiority over other mosques."

Hasson supported his view with narrations from *'Bihaar Al-Anwaar'* by Al-Majlisi and *'Yanaabi Al-Mawaddah'* by Al-Qandoozi. In a previous writing by Hasson, has posited: "There is no consensus among all the Muslims that *Al-Aqsa* Mosque is the one that is Jerusalem. For, some of them believe that it is a mosque in the heaven that is situated directly over Jerusalem or Makkah." Hasson attempted, by this postulation, to suggest that there is a heavenly Quds and an earthly Quds!!

Eva Lazarus Yahweh:

Eva Lazarus Yahweh presented a research in which she asserts: "The mosque mentioned in Surah Al-Israa has been understood since the beginning as a far-away heavenly mosque! It was not meant to be the mosque that was only built in Jerusalem during the Umayyad dynasty!"

Lazarus Yahweh supported her theory with an article written by Joseph Horowitz about the same topic in which he claimed that *Al-Aqsa* Mosque meant in the verse of Surah Al-Israa is a prayer place that is situated in higher and heavenly Quds. Horowitz then said: "We need to understand the opinion of the early scholars of Tafseer in the context that all of them agreed that *Al-Aqsa* means *Baytul-Maqdis* and what they meant by *Baytul-Maqdis* is the one that is in the heaven. However, with the passage of time and generations, terminologies were muddled up and this led to a later belief that *Al-Aqsa* Mosque is the one that is situated in the Quds of this earth."

Yehuda Litany:

Yehuda Litany wrote an article in the Jewish newspaper, Yediot Ahronot, under the title, **"An Intellectual War over *Al-Aqsa* Mosque".** In this article, he cast doubt on the Muslims' unanimity on *Al-Aqsa* Mosque being the one that is in Jerusalem. He said: "The truth is that there are Islamic interpretations for the word '*Al-Aqsa* Mosque' that suggest the mosque being in other places among which is a place near Al-Madeenah Al-Munawwarah."!!

Kister M.J.:

He wrote the following: "There is a controversy among the Muslims concerning the virtue of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque." He then supported this view of his with reports whose narrators were Shiites.

The above is just a few of what the Jewish scholars have written with the aim of casting doubt on the virtue of Al-Quds and *Al-Aqsa* Mosque in order to weaken the respect that the Muslims have for both and the position both occupy in Islam; and in order to support their vicious claim that *Al-Aqsa* is a mosque in heaven.

Al-Aqsa Mosque in Orientalists' Writings

The orientalists stirred up a number of issues that are connected to the history of Jerusalem and *Al-Aqsa* Mosque and their position in the estimation of the Muslims. The reason for stirring up these issues was to show that the Jerusalem city has no significant position in Islam and has no strategic or administrative importance. We are going to mention some of their statements in this regard.

Goldzier:

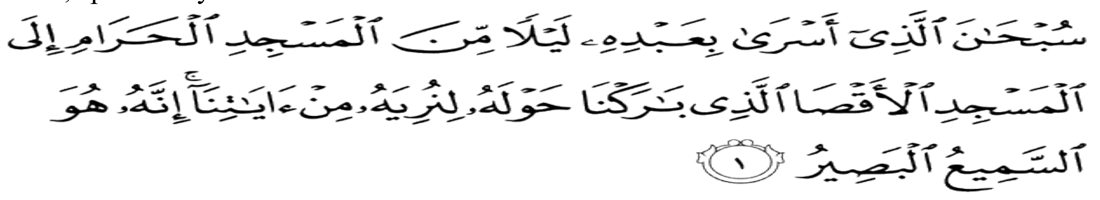
Goldzier (1850 – 1920) was an Austrian orientalist of Jewish origin. He is regarded as the primary source for many of the Jewish researchers who wrote about Jerusalem and *Al-Aqsa* Mosque. His writings are regarded as reference books for Western students of orientalism. He was among the first writers to cast doubt on the Hadiths recorded on the virtue and blessedness of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque. He claimed that Abdul-Malik ibn Marwaan prevented the people from performing Hajj during the time of the crisis of Ibn Zubayr and that he then built the Dome of the Rock at *Al-Aqsa* Mosque so that people could make pilgrimage there and circumambulate around it instead of Al-Ka'bah!!

He also claimed that Abdul-Malik wanted to force people to perform Hajj there as a religious obligation and that he got Imam Ibn Shihaab Az-Zuhri, who was a famous scholar of Hadith to forge Hadiths for him in this regard. He claimed that one of such Hadiths is: "No journey (for the purpose of worship) should be undertaken but to the three mosques."

Among his outrageous claims was that all the Hadiths about the virtues of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque were narrated through Az-Zuhri alone.

Régis Blachère:

The French orientalist Régis Blachère wrote, in his translation of the meaning of the Qur'an to French, specifically on the verse:



"Glorified (and Exalted) is He (Allâh) (above all that (evil) they associate with Him) Who took His slave (Muhammad, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) for a journey by night from Al-Masjid-al-Harâm (at Makkah) to the farthest mosque (in Jerusalem), the neighbourhood whereof We have blessed, in order that We might show him (Muhammad, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) of Our Ayât (proofs, evidences, lessons, signs, etc.). Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer." (Al-Israa 17:1)

He wrote: "The Muslims who are contemporaries of the Prophet, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him – the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) – seemed to believe that what is meant by *Al-Aqsa* is a mosque in the heaven and that Israa means Mi'raaj (ascension to the heaven). However, during the Umayyad caliphate, there was an attempt to strip Makkah of its unique status as the headquarters of Islam. As a result, *Al-Aqsa* was no longer regarded as a heavenly mosque but a city in a Jewish state."

From where have these Jews and orientalists got these theories of theirs?!! What are the sources they relied upon to arrive at the opinion that *Al-Aqsa* was a mosque in the heaven and that its status is doubtful?!!

Summary:

We would realize that, in support of their views, the Jews have relied heavily on all the texts and statements by which the Shiites attempted to disparage the Umayyad caliphs and confer on their so-called 'holy' places a status higher than that of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque.

The Jews then used these false accusations and lies to sever the tie between Palestine and *Al-Aqsa* Mosque; and in order to falsely claim that there is no status for Jerusalem in Islam and that there is no link between the city and Islam; and that *Al-Aqsa* is another mosque, and not the one in Palestine.

The Established Status of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque in the Estimation of the Muslims

After mentioning the misconceptions of those who sought to cast doubt on the position of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque in the past pages, it is worthwhile to explain the position of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque in the belief of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah. This will repudiate all the falsehoods, lies and distortions. Allah says:

بَلْ نَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهُ فَإِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٌ وَلَكُمُ الْوَيْلُ مِمَّا تَصِفُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

"Nay, We fling (send down) the truth (this Qur'ân) against the falsehood (disbelief), so it destroys it, and behold, it (falsehood) is vanished. And woe to you for that (lie) which you ascribe (to Allah)." (Al-Anbiyaa 21:18)

There is no doubt that *Al-Aqsa* Mosque and Jerusalem have many virtues and are enormously blessed. There are abundant proofs for this in the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him. It is only those whose hearts are filled with hatred and malice that can deny this or cast doubt on it. Though we believe that many Muslims do not need to be reminded of the position of the blessed *Al-Aqsa* because the statements of the doubt-casters are weaker than the web of a spider, yet we feel that we should mention some of the proofs that unambiguously underline its status without going into details. We have a good example in Allah's Book where Allah informs us that some stupid people would remonstrate against changing the Qiblah from *Al-Aqsa* to the Sacred Mosque in Makkah. Allah informed His Messenger, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him of this impending opposition even before He commanded him to face the Sacred Mosque. He says, in the following glorious words,

۞ سَيَقُولُ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَا وَلَّاهُمْ عَنْ قِبْلَتِهِمُ الَّتِي كَانُوا عَلَيْهَا قُلْ لِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ
وَالْمَغْرِبُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿١٤٢﴾

"The fools among the people (pagans, hypocrites, and Jews) will say, "What has turned them (Muslims) from their Qiblah (prayer direction (towards Jerusalem)) to which they used to face in prayer." Say, (O Muhammad (peace be upon him)) "To Allâh belong both, east and the west. He guides whom He wills to the Straight Way."" (Al-Baqarah 2:142)

Allah describes those who uttered this statement as fools because they remonstrated against His judgment. Therefore, His describing them as fools was a sufficient response to that statement. However, Allah did not leave this misconception un-dispelled. He adds:

قُلْ لِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ

"To Allâh belong both, east and the west." (Al-Baqarah 2:142)

This means: All sides and regions are in Allah's possession and under Hus sole control.

Our Established Belief on *Al-Aqsa* Mosque

In order to clearly and precisely take on those who cast doubt on the status of *Al-Aqsa* and those who are hostile to Al-Aqsa, we deem it necessary to mention some of our established beliefs, so that the truth may be revealed.

'Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa' and *'Al-Ardh Al-Muqaddasah'* (the Blessed Land) are mentioned in a number of verses in the Qur'an. The scholars of Tafseer, while unanimously agreed on the virtue of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque, did not rely on the verse of Surah Al-Israa alone as a proof of the status of Al-Quds and *Al-Aqsa* Mosque, they also rely on other verses. Some of these verses are:

سُبْحَٰنَ ٱلَّذِىٓ أَسْرَىٰ بِعَبْدِهِۦ لَيْلًا مِّنَ ٱلْمَسْجِدِ ٱلْحَرَامِ إِلَى
ٱلْمَسْجِدِ ٱلْأَقْصَا ٱلَّذِى بَٰرَكْنَا حَوْلَهُۥ لِنُرِيَهُۥ مِنْ ءَايَٰتِنَآ ۚ إِنَّهُۥ هُوَ
ٱلسَّمِيعُ ٱلْبَصِيرُ ١

"Glorified (and Exalted) is He (Allâh) (above all that (evil) they associate with Him) Who took His slave (Muhammad, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) for a journey by night from Al-Masjid-al-Harâm (at Makkah) to the farthest mosque (in Jerusalem), the neighbourhood whereof We have blessed, in order that We might show him (Muhammad, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) of Our Ayât (proofs, evidences, lessons, signs, etc.). Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer." (Al-Israaa 17:1)

وَنَجَّيْنَٰهُ وَلُوطًا إِلَى ٱلْأَرْضِ ٱلَّتِى بَٰرَكْنَا فِيهَا لِلْعَٰلَمِينَ ٧١

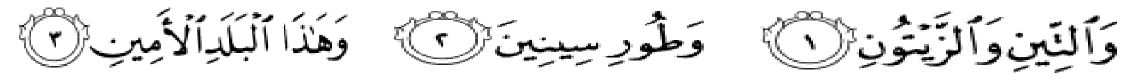
"And We rescued him and Lût (Lot) to the land which We have blessed for the 'Alamîn (mankind and jinn)." (Al-Anbiyaa 21:71)

وَلِسُلَيْمَٰنَ ٱلرِّيحَ عَاصِفَةً تَجْرِى بِأَمْرِهِۦٓ إِلَى ٱلْأَرْضِ ٱلَّتِى بَٰرَكْنَا فِيهَا ۚ وَكُنَّا بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ
عَٰلِمِينَ ٨١

"And to Sulaimân (Solomon) (We subjected) the wind strongly raging, running by his command towards the land which We had blessed. And of everything We are the All-Knower." (Al-Anbiyaa 21:81)

وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ ٱلْقُرَى ٱلَّتِى بَٰرَكْنَا فِيهَا قُرًى ظَٰهِرَةً وَقَدَّرْنَا فِيهَا ٱلسَّيْرَ ۖ سِيرُوا۟
فِيهَا لَيَالِىَ وَأَيَّامًا ءَامِنِينَ ١٨

"And We placed between them and the towns which We had blessed, towns easy to be seen, and We made the stages (of journey) between them easy (saying): "Travel in them safely both by night and day." (Saba' 34:18)



"By the fig, and the olive. By Mount Sinai. By this city of security (Makkah)." (At-Teen 95:1-3)

Some of the scholars of Tafseer mentioned that what is meant by the fig is the land of Sham and by olive is Al-Quds.

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا ادْخُلُوا هَٰذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَدًا وَادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا
وَقُولُوا حِطَّةٌ نَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطَايَاكُمْ ۚ وَسَنَزِيدُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

"And (remember) when We said: "Enter this town (Jerusalem) and eat bountifully therein with pleasure and delight wherever you wish, and enter the gate in prostration (or bowing with humility) and say: 'Forgive us,' and We shall forgive you your sins and shall increase (reward) for the good-doers." (Al-Baqarah 2:58)

يَا قَوْمِ ادْخُلُوا الْأَرْضَ الْمُقَدَّسَةَ الَّتِي كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَرْتَدُّوا عَلَىٰ أَدْبَارِكُمْ فَتَنْقَلِبُوا
خَاسِرِينَ ﴿٢١﴾

"O my people! Enter the holy land (Palestine) which Allâh has assigned to you and turn not back (in flight); for then you will be returned as losers." (Al-Maa'idah 5:21)

Al-Aqsa is the second mosque to be built on the surface of the earth after the Sacred Mosque in Makkah. Al-Bukhari reported on the authority of Abu Dhari – may Allah be pleased with him – who narrated: I said, "O Allah's Messenger! Which mosque was first built on the surface of the earth?" He said, "*Al-Masjidul-Haram* (in Makkah)." I said, "Which was built next?" He replied "The mosque of *Al-Aqsa* (in Jerusalem)." I said, "What was the period of construction between the two?" He said, "Forty years." He added, "Wherever (you may be, and) the prayer time becomes due, perform the prayer there, for the best thing is to do so (i.e. to offer the prayers in time)."

Al-Aqsa Mosque is blessed and its surrounding is also blessed. It is a mosque on the surface of the earth which Allah has blessed. Allah says:

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَىٰ بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى
الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ
السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ ﴿١﴾

"Glorified (and Exalted) is He (Allâh) (above all that (evil) they associate with Him) Who took His slave (Muhammad, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) for a journey by night from Al-Masjid-al-Harâm (at Makkah) to the farthest mosque (in Jerusalem), the neighbourhood whereof We have blessed, in order that We might show him (Muhammad, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) of Our Ayât (proofs, evidences, lessons, signs, etc.). Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer." (Al-Israaa 17:1)

Some scholars say: "If this mosque did not have any merit except this verse, it would be enough for it is inclusive of all other blessings. This is because; if its surroundings are blessed, its own blessing would be manifold. Among the blessings of this mosque is that it is given superiority over all other mosques except the Sacred Mosque in Makkah and the Prophet's Mosque in Al-Madeenah.

Al-Aqsa Mosque was the first Qiblah (prayer direction) of the Muslims. Al-Baraa ibn 'Aazib – may Allah be pleased with him – narrated: Allah's Messenger prayed facing *Baitul-Maqdis* for sixteen or seventeen months but he loved to face the Ka'bah (at Makkah) so Allah revealed:

قَدْ نَرَىٰ تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِي ٱلسَّمَآءِ ۖ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَىٰهَا ۚ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ
ٱلْمَسْجِدِ ٱلْحَرَامِ ۚ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنتُمْ فَوَلُّوا۟ وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُۥ ۗ وَإِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا۟ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ
لَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ ٱلْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ ۗ وَمَا ٱللَّهُ بِغَٰفِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤٤﴾

"Verily! We have seen the turning of your (Muhammad's (peace be upon him)) face towards the heaven. Surely, We shall turn you to a Qiblah (prayer direction) that shall please you, so turn your face in the direction of Al-Masjid- al-Harâm (at Makkah). And wheresoever you people are, turn your faces (in prayer) in that direction. Certainly, the people who were given the Scripture (i.e. Jews and the Christians) know well that, that (your turning towards the direction of the Ka'bah at Makkah in prayers) is the truth from their Lord. And Allâh is not unaware of what they do." So the Prophet faced the Ka'bah."

However, changing the Qiblah from *Baytul-Maqdis* did not cancel the latter's status. Rather, it remains greatly respected in the hearts of the Muslims and honoured in the Sharee'ah of Islam.

Al-Aqsa Mosque is the place to which the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him, was taken on a night journey from the first mosque ever erected on the surface of the heart to the second one ever built on the earth. So the two honours of both houses were combined for him. Anas ibn Maalik – may Allah be pleased with him – narrated that the Messenger of Allah, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him, said: "I was brought *al-Buraq* which is an animal white and long, larger than a donkey but smaller than a mule, who would place his hoof a distance equal to the range of version. I mounted it and came to the Temple (*Baitul-Maqdis* in Jerusalem), then tethered it to the ring used by the prophets. I entered the mosque and prayed two *rak'ahs* in it, and then came out and Gabriel brought me a vessel of wine and a vessel of milk. I chose the milk, and Gabriel said: You have chosen the natural thing. Then he took me to heaven."

Al-Aqsa Mosque is the only place on the surface of the earth that hosted all the Prophets – from Adam to Muhammad (peace be upon them all) for the greatest conference in human history. The Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him led other Prophets in prayer on that night of Israa in confirmation of its Islamic nature; in affirmation of the guardianship of Muhammad's Ummah over *Al-Aqsa* Mosque; in announcement of Muhammad's inheritance of the holy places of the Messengers who came before him; and in demonstration of the fact that Muhammad's mission covers all these holy places and that Islam is the rightful heir of all the monotheistic faiths that came before it.

The Prophets – may Allah be pleased with them – never convened in any other place beside *Al-Aqsa* thereby increasing it in status and nobility.

Muslim recorded on the authority Abu Hurayrah – may Allah be pleased with him – who narrated that the Messenger of Allah, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him said: "I found myself in *Hijr* and the *Quraysh* were asking me about my might journey. I was asked about things pertaining to *Bait-ul-Maqdis* which I could not preserve (in my mind). I was very much vexed, so vexed as I had never been before. Then Allah raised it (*Bait-ul-Maqdis*) before my eyes. I looked towards it, and I gave them the information about whatever they questioned me I also saw myself among the group of apostles. I saw Moses saying prayer and found him to be a well-built man as if he was a man of the tribe of *Shanu'ah*. I saw Jesus son of Mary (peace be upon him) offering prayer, of all of men he had the closest resemblance with 'Urwah b. Masu'd al-Thaqafi. I saw Ibrahim (peace be

upon him) offering prayer; he had the closest resemblance with your companion (the Prophet himself) amongst people. When the time of prayer came I led them. When I completed the prayer, someone said: Here is Malik, the keeper of the Hell; pay him salutations. I turned to him, but he preceded me in salutation."

The Messenger of Allah, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him extolled the virtue *Al-Aqsa* Mosque and it and informed us about how the heart of a Muslim is attached to it to the extent that he would wish to have a narrow space through which he could look at *Al-Aqsa* Mosque and that succeeding in doing so would be dearer to him than this world and all that is in it.

Abu Dharr – may Allah be pleased with him – narrated: We were in the presence of the Messenger of Allah, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him arguing as to which of the two mosques is greater in merit: the Prophet's Mosque or *Al-Aqsa* Mosque. Thereupon, Allah's Messenger, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him said, "A prayer in this mosque of mine is greater in reward than four prayers performed in *Al-Aqsa* Mosque; but it is a great place to perform prayers at. A man would wish to have a space as narrow as the size of the rope with which he ties his horse down, through which he could see *Baytul-Maqdis* and that would be better for him than this world and all there is in it."

Allah's Messenger, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him predicted that *Baytul-Maqdis* would be brought under the control of Islam; and such a prediction is one of the signs of prophethood. 'Awf ibn Maalik – may Allah be pleased with him – narrated: "I went to the Prophet during the Battle of Tabuk while he was sitting in a leather tent. He said, "Count six signs that indicate the approach of the Hour: my death, the conquest of Jerusalem."

Al-Aqsa Mosque is the station of the victorious group and the abode of the believers. 'Imraan ibn Husayn – may Allah be pleased with him – narrated that Allah's Messenger, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him said: "A group from among my Ummah shall continue to be upon the truth, defeating whoever stands against them until the last of them would kill the anti-Christ (*Ad-Dajjaal*)."

And it is known that Jesus – peace be upon him – would catch up with the anti-Christ at *Ludd* gate in Palestine and then kill him.

Al-Aqsa Mosque and Jerusalem, in general, is the land where mankind would be gathered (in the Last Day); they would also be brought to Resurrection from there.

Maymunah bint Sa'd, the freed slave of Allah's Messenger, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him narrated that she addressed the Prophet: "O Allah's Prophet! Tell us about Jerusalem." The Prophet, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him then replied: "It is the land of gathering and resurrection."

It is inside *Al-Aqsa* Mosque that the believers would seek refuge against the anti-Christ, for he would not be able to enter it. Allah's Messenger, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him said about the anti-Christ: "He would live on the earth for forty days and his authority would cover the entire earth with the exception of four places: the Sacred Mosque in Makkah, the Prophet's Mosque, *Al-Aqsa* Mosque and the Sinai Mosque."

Al-Aqsa Mosque is a mosque unto which a journey for the purpose of worship is undertaken. All the scholars unanimously agreed that visiting *Al-Aqsa* Mosque and performing prayer there are commendable acts. They also agreed that no journey for the purpose of worship should be undertaken but to only three mosques which include *Al-Aqsa* and that these three mosques have superiority over other mosques. According to the Hadith recorded by Al-Bukhaari and Muslim on the authority of Abu Hurayrah, the Messenger of Allah, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him said: "No journey should be undertaken (for the purpose of worship) but to three mosques: the

Sacred Mosque, the Prophet's Mosque and *Al-Aqsa* Mosque."

That is why many of the Companions – may Allah be pleased with them – travelled to Jerusalem to pray in *Al-Aqsa* Mosque; and our righteous predecessors also filled up the mosque with classes of knowledge.

An-Nawawi – may Allah have mercy upon him – said: "This Hadith vividly shows the great honours and superiority of these three mosques over other mosques. For, they are the mosques of the Prophets – peace and blessings be upon them. It also shows the merit of praying therein and travelling there for the purpose of worship."

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar wrote: "This Hadith indicates the superiority of these mosques over others because they are mosques of the Prophets; and because of the fact that the first is the Qiblah of the Muslims, the second was the Qiblah of the past nations and the third was built upon foundation of piety."

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah was asked about the ruling concerning visiting *Al-Aqsa* Mosque and praying there, and he responded: "It is authentically reported by Al-Bukhaari and Muslim that the Prophet, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him said that the journey for the purpose of worship should be made to only three mosque of which is *Al-Aqsa* Mosque…The Hadith is successively reported. The entire Ummah agreed on its authenticity and the Muslims scholars unanimously agree that travelling there for the purpose of worship is not only approved but recommended. 'Umar – may Allah be pleased with him – used to go and pray there."

A prayer performed at *Al-Aqsa* has multiple rewards. Abu Dharr – may Allah be pleased with him – said: We were in the presence of the Messenger of Allah, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him arguing as to which of the two mosques is greater in merit: the Prophet's Mosque or *Al-Aqsa* Mosque. Thereupon, Allah's Messenger, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him said, "A prayer in this mosque of mine is greater in reward than four prayers performed in *Al-Aqsa* Mosque; but it is a great place to perform prayers at. A man would wish to have a space as narrow as the size of the rope with which he ties his horse down, through which he could see *Baytul-Maqdis* and that would be better for him than this world and all there is in it."

Performing prayers at *Al-Aqsa* Mosque attracts immense reward. An-Nasai recorded on the authority of 'Abdullaah ibn 'Amr ibn Al-'As – may Allah be pleased with him and his father – that the Prophet, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him said: "When Solomon son of David (peace be upon them) finished building Jerusalem, he asked Allah for three things: to be able to make judicial decisions that would concur with Allah's; a kingdom the like of which no one after him would have; and that no one who would come to the mosque for the purpose of praying there would return without being as sinless as the day his mother gave birth to him. Solomon was granted the first two requests and I hope the third would also be granted him."

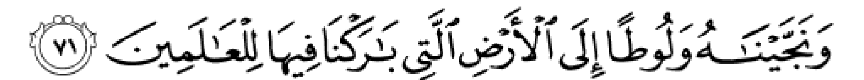
Jerusalem and *Al-Aqsa* have been sacred since the ancient times. Allah says:



"O my people! Enter the holy land (Palestine)." (Al-Maaidah 5:21)

This was an address to Moses – peace be upon him – and his people before the children of Israael came to Palestine and before the Israelite prophets whom the Jews claim to be descendants of.

Allah says about Prophets Abraham and Lot – peace be upon them –:



"*And We rescued him and Lût (Lot) to the land which We have blessed for the 'Alamîn (mankind and jinn).*" (Al-Anbiyaa 21:71)

That was the blessing that had being abiding there before the time of Abraham – peace be upon him. That was why the Yubusides moved and lived nearby and did not live inside it because it is a place of worship.

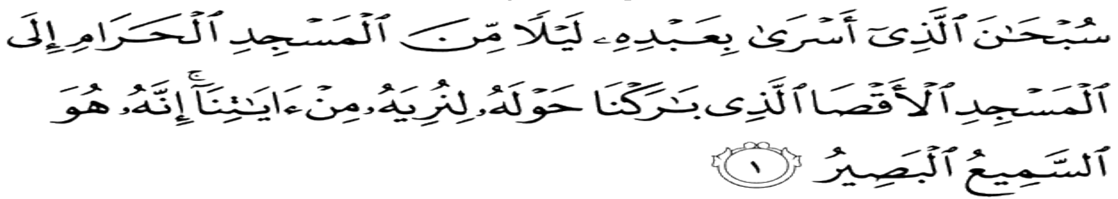
Many of the Prophet's companions came to *Al-Aqsa* Mosque. They came to Jerusalem to live, worship and preach. Some of these companions are: Abu 'Ubaydah ibn Al-Jarrah, who was the commander-in-chief of the Muslim army that brought the land of Syria under the control of Islam; Bilaal ibn Rabaah, who made the call to prayer at *Al-Aqsa* Mosque; Mu'adh ibn Jabal, whom Abu 'Ubaydah appointed to succeed him as the governor of Jerusalem; Khaalid ibn Al-Waleed, the unsheathed sword of Allah, who witnessed the conquest of Jerusalem; 'Ubaadah ibn Saamit, who was the first judge of Palestine and lived, died and buried in Jerusalem; Tameem ibn Aws Ad-Daari; and Abdullaah ibn Salaam, who visited Jerusalem and witnessed the Muslims' formal taking control of the city; and many more.

The land of *Al-Aqsa* is different from all other territories that the Muslims conquered. It is unique in that it is the only land that the rightly guided caliph, Umar ibn Al-Khattaab – may Allah be pleased with him – personally accepted its keys after its coming under the rule of the Muslims. He built a prayer house in the courtyard of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque in the year 15 A.H., after Allah had made it easy for the Muslims bring Jerusalem under their control. He also turned its vast lands into an endowment to become a trust upon the Ummah till the establishment of the Hour.

It is in the land of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque that followers of Muhammad, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him sacrificed their souls in driving away the Romans and the crusaders. They repelled nine crusade attacks under the commandership of Nuruddeen Muhammad ibn Zanki and Salaahuddeen Al-Ayyubi – may Allah have mercy on them and on all other Muslim commanders and leaders who led the Mujahideen until Jerusalem was liberated after 91 years of its invasion and usurpation. These noble men made such a great sacrifice because of the position of Jerusalem and *Al-Aqsa* Mosque in the hearts of the Muslims. It is their blessed land and it is a part of our faith. The enemies will never succeed in removing the love of *Al-Aqsa* from our hearts however hard they try to spread lies and falsehoods.

Al-Aqsa Mosque has had and is still having the attention of the Muslims. What the Muslim scholars wrote about the virtues of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque during the early and the subsequent centuries clearly shows the status of the mosque. Those manuscripts are still being studied and edited till today. The city has also enjoyed world-class studies and researches that no other Islamic city has enjoyed. The scholars have written many books on virtues of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque and Jerusalem in which they encouraged traveling there and performing prayer inside its mosque.

However much we try to enumerate the virtues of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque, the following statement of Allah is still the best commendation for that great mosque:



"*Glorified (and Exalted) is He (Allâh) (above all that (evil) they associate with Him) Who took His slave (Muhammad, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) for a journey by night from Al-Masjid-al-Harâm (at Makkah) to the farthest mosque (in Jerusalem), the neighbourhood whereof We have blessed, in order that We might show him (Muhammad, blessings and peace of*

Allah be upon him) of Our Ayât (proofs, evidences, lessons, signs, etc.). Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer." (Al-Israaa 17:1)

Had this mosque had no other virtue except this verse, it would have been enough. For, if its neighbourhood could be so blessed, the mosque itself should be naturally blessed in manifold; and of its blessedness is that it has superiority over other mosques with the only exception of the Sacred Mosque in Makkah and the Prophet's Mosque in Al-Madeenah.

Finally, I would like to pose the following questions:

How could *Al-Aqsa* Mosque be in the heaven while the Messenger of Allah, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him had predicted its conquest and clearly mentioned its virtue with his statement: "How excellent the prayer place it is!"

How could it be in the heaven while its neighborhood has been blessed and the word 'blessing' occurred in the Qur'an concerning Palestine, the land of Jerusalem, seven times?! Then is the entire heaven not blessed already?!

How could it be in the heaven while the Messenger of Allah, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him has told his companions when they argued concerning the Prophet's Mosque and *Al-Aqsa* Mosque as to which of the two is greater in merit, "A prayer in this mosque of mine is greater in reward than four prayers performed in *Al-Aqsa* Mosque"?!

How could it be in the heaven while the prayer performed there is multiplied in reward; and the Companions have travelled there; and it is the station of the Victorious Group and is the heart of the abode of the believers and the Land of Resurrection?!!

How could it be in heaven since it has been the refuge of the Prophets and the place in which they called to the oneness of Allah?! The Messenger of Allah, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him was taken on a night journey there and from there ascended to heaven. The Prophet, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him told us: "The ant-Christ will never enter it for it is going to be the fortress of the believers."

How could it be in heaven when there is a clear and authentic narration that it is the second mosque ever built on the surface of the earth after the Sacred Mosque in Makkah?! Al-Bukhari reported on the authority of Abu Dhari – may Allah be pleased with him – who narrated: I said, "O Allah's Messenger! Which mosque was first built on the surface of the earth?" He said, "*Al-Masjid-ul-Haram* (in Makkah)." I said, "Which was built next?" He replied "The mosque of *Al-Aqsa* (in Jerusalem)." I said, "What was the period of construction between the two?" He said, "Forty years." He added, "Wherever (you may be, and) the prayer time becomes due, perform the prayer there, for the best thing is to do so (i.e. to offer the prayers in time)."

How could it be in the heaven, while the Hadith, "No journey (for the purpose of worship) should be undertaken…" is an authentic and successively reported Hadith narrated by a group of the Prophet's Companions and the same was reported from them by trustworthy narrators and the Ummah accepted it and it is acted upon by the righteous predecessors and those who followed them till today?!!

No Muslim ever doubts the fact that *Al-Aqsa* Mosque is the one that is in Jerusalem and to which the Prophet, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him was taken on a night journey.

How could it be in the heaven while no authentic and uninterrupted report was transmitted to us that the Prophet's companions – may Allah be pleased with them – understood *Al-Aqsa* Mosque to be a mosque in the heaven?! The Prophet, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him described the mosque to the Quraysh people and those who have visited Jerusalem from among them confirmed his description.

As for the Prophet, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him himself, Allah describes him in the following noble words:



"Nor does he speak of (his own) desire. It is only a Revelation revealed." (An-Najm 53:3-4)

How could it be in heaven while the Muslim Ummah, generation after generation, has believed in the fact *Al-Aqsa* Mosque is the mosque that is Jerusalem and nothing contrary to this has ever been imagined?!

Therefore, we are telling those Jewish 'researchers', the orientalists who were before them and the Shiites who share the same opinion with them that none of the Prophet's companions or their successors or the scholars of the Ummah ever said that *Al-Aqsa* was a mosque in the heaven. What they understood from the verse and the Hadiths is that it is the mosque that is Jerusalem. This is the understanding of the Ummah for the past fourteen centuries. How then could someone come with an absurd interpretation that it is a mosque in the heaven?!!

However much you try to cover truth with falsehood, you will never succeed. The hearts of the Companions – may Allah be pleased with them – were yearning to bring Jerusalem under the control of Islam even before the entire Syrian region; for these companions understood that the holy land mentioned in the Qur'aan is the land of Jerusalem and Palestine.

We thank Allah that we are not the ones who gave the mosque its name '*Al-Aqsa* Mosque'. Rather, it is Allah Who gave it its name. Equally, we are not the ones who claim that the Prophet, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him was taken on a night journey from the Sacred Mosque in Allah to *Al-Aqsa* Mosque. It is rather a clear reality from the explicit statement of Allah from His noble Book and from the authentic and successively transmitted Sunnah of the Prophet, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him.

Conclusion

We are sure that the Muslims are unanimous in their respect for *Al-Aqsa* Mosque, that the virtue of that mosque is an incontestable fact and that *Al-Aqsa* Mosque mentioned in the verse is the one that is in Jerusalem. But the Shiites do not look at *Al-Aqsa* Mosque as the Ahlus-Sunnah do.

According to some of them, it is mind-blowing that *Al-Aqsa* Mosque and Jerusalem brought under the Muslim control by (their archenemy) ‘Umar – may Allah be pleased with him – should enjoy any status or value. It is unthinkable to this group of Shiites that Jerusalem and *Al-Aqsa* Mosque, reconstructed by the Umayyad and liberated by Salaahuddeen Al-Ayyubi who crushed the crusaders and handed them a humiliating defeat and drove them from the Muslim lands should enjoy any status!

The Shiites have three different opinions concerning *Al-Aqsa* Mosque:

One: That *Al-Aqsa* Mosque is not the one that is Jerusalem, and that the mosque referred to in the first verse of Soorah Al-Israaa is Al-Bayt Al-Ma‘moor that is in the fourth heaven unto which the Prophet, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him ascended.

According to this opinion, *Al-Aqsa* Mosque that is in Palestine is not among the three mosques unto which undertaking journey for the purpose of worship is recommended, and that it was built during the reign of the Umayyad who publicized its sacredness and commanded people to make pilgrimage there and forged Hadiths in order to encourage people to visit it!! This opinion also holds that the Shiite politicians’ hallowing of the mosque is only political and not religious.

Two: The supporters of this opinion hold that though there are texts in Shiite books and narrations indicating that *Al-Aqsa* is a mosque in the heaven and not the one in Palestine, they believe that this does not decrease the status of the Jerusalem mosque and the need to defend and liberate it for it is one of the Muslim mosques. However, they believe that the status of Kufah, Qom and Karbala mosques is higher than that of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque.

Three: The proponents of this opinion believe that *Al-Aqsa* Mosque is the mosque mention in the first verse of Surah Al-Israa and that its status supersedes that of other mosques except the Sacred Mosque in Makkah, the Prophet’s Mosque in Al-Madeenah and the Kufah mosque!! Therefore, according to this opinion, *Al-Aqsa* Mosque is nowhere near the Kufah and Karbalah mosques or the other Shiites holy sites in status and rank.

The common factor among these three opinions is that the Kufah and Karbala mosques as well as the grave of Husayn and the Samarra dome are superior to *Al-Aqsa* Mosque whether it is in earth or in the heaven!! This is, indeed, very strange, utterly grievous and clearly contradictory!!

We ask Allah for wellbeing and safety. We hope that we have succeeded in explaining the truth and exposed the falsehood of the Shiite claims.

I beseech Allah to accept this work of mine and make it devoted exclusively to Him. If I had done well, the credit in that should be given to Allah alone and if I have made any mistake, it is from me and Satan.

All praise is due to Allah, Lord of all the worlds.